2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
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be that a married woman considers herself a member of her husband's family, but as a sign of respect addresses her husband's relatives in each case as though she belonged to a younger generation than she does in reality. A custom in vogue among the Shilluk may have some connection with this usage, i.e. widows other than the mother are taken as wives by a man's sons. Further, it is not considered disgraceful for young unmarried sons to sleep with their own father's wives. A young wife may thus see herself as the consort to two generations at once, and address her husband's sisters and parents by those terms that she would use if she were wife of the younger of the two successive mates. A woman still belongs to her own clan after marriage, so it seems strange that she should use the terms employed by her husband. In this connection it must be noted that in some districts husband and wife address one another as *umia* and *nyimia* before the birth of the first child, and that a man calls his wife's sister *nyimia*. This last anomaly may be due to some feeling that the wife is taken into the family of her husband, though no adoption ceremony was discovered. It should be noted that a man calls his wife's sister "sister"; he does not treat her with any ceremony, and if she visits her married sister the husband is not bound by any taboos, though he cannot have connection with her as he can with his *yura*. In certain circumstances (the death or barrenness of a wife) he may marry her.

Everywhere the "in-law" relationship is one that requires much tact, and the Shilluk, as is usual in savage society, show respect by means of ceremonial avoidance. While much emphasis is laid upon the avoidance of persons related by marriage, it should be noted that there is no avoidance between blood-relations—a man does not avoid his mother, sister, or daughter.

A Shilluk avoids all those whom he calls *ora*, of whom the first in importance is the wife's mother. In those parts of the Shilluk country that we visited, avoidance of the mother-in-law implied that a man must not enter her house, and care would be taken never to meet her face to face out of doors. If a man saw his mother-in-law he would take a different road and send a friend to greet her respectfully. We did not find avoidance carried to the length described by Hofmayr, who states that a man may not enter the village in which his mother-in-law dwells; one informant, however, told us that a man might not enter her village until the cows of the bride-wealth had been paid.

2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
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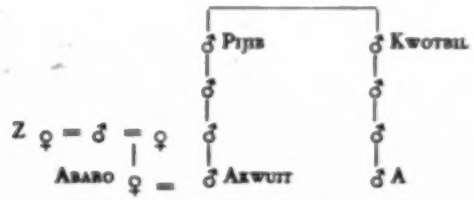
606 Among the late Dr. Rivers' notes is a case recorded at Goz Garri, north of the main Shilluk country, where—

> " not only was the village avoided, but the term mother-in-law had the most liberal interpretation I have ever known. The very wide extension of this taboo came out through a concrete case. I took a Shilluk to Goz Garri from Hillet Abbas. He was unmarried, and directly we landed he disappeared to the outskirts of the village and could not be persuaded to go into the village with me. The cause was the presence of the wife of the father of Abaro (not her actual mother), Abaro being the wife of Akwuit, whom the man called *uwa*. Akwuit was the great-grandson of Pijib, the half-brother of Kwotbil, the great-grandfather of the man, so that in our nomenclature a man has to avoid for life the stepmother of the wife of his third cousin. The reality of the avoidance was obvious, but I could not discover what would result if it were infringed, except a quarrel and the chance of a blow from the Shilluk club."



A called Akwuit *uwa* and avoided Z.

Although this behaviour seems so absurd to us, it is only the extreme application of the ceremonial etiquette due to the wife's mother. Its extension to the mother-in-law of the *uwa* will be apparent when rights of access and inheritance are considered. It is possible that the refusal to enter the village may have been due to this Shilluk exercising his rights of access and carrying on an intrigue with Abaro; it must be noticed that the man in question was not married. It seems improbable that a man would be obliged to avoid the villages of all the classificatory mothers-in-law of all his clansmen, as the restrictions of his movements would be intolerable, and it is possible that this case arose from special circumstances. But on stating this case to one of our informants at Fenikang, the wide significance of the conception of the wife's mother seemed quite correct to him. He said that all the wives of the " fathers ", as well as all the actual mothers of all the wives of those men whom he called *uwa*, were *ora* to him and hence should be avoided. To him, however, this form of ceremonial behaviour did not necessitate the avoidance of the villages where these women lived. He volunteered the information that

587

2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
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potentially he was heir to the wives of any of his *uwa*, but that should he try to claim the widow of one of his *uwa*, not having previously avoided her mother, the latter would make much trouble about it and try to prevent him from marrying her daughter. He might perhaps be able to settle the matter by killing a sheep and getting some old man to act as peacemaker. The wide rights of access that the Shilluk have to the wives of certain of their clansmen and the wide sense in which inheritance of a "brother's" wife may be interpreted is thus intimately connected with their liberal interpretation of avoidance.

Avoidance of certain other women would not prevent a man from entering the house and even eating there, so long as the woman absented herself and the man sat upon the bare ground. To sit upon a skin, which might be the woman's sleeping mat, would be an intolerable breach of etiquette, for such an act might be taken to imply the possibility of sexual relations.

The wife's *mia*, i.e. her father's brother's wife, is also treated as an *ora* and avoided, but in a modified manner. We were able to observe a good example of this form of behaviour. We were working on the small steamer Culex when an old woman joined the group of informants. Our informant, Fakwang, a young married man, went quietly away. We persuaded him to return and he sat on the other side of the funnel so that he could neither see nor be seen by this woman, who was his wife's *mia* and hence his *ora*. Had she been his wife's mother nothing would have induced him to remain; as it was, he said, there would very probably be bad talk among the women about it and he might be reproached that his wife's *mia* had seen his "nakedness".

The wife's brother's wife is called *ora* and treated with the respect due to a mother-in-law. How far she is regarded as a potential mother-in-law it would be difficult to say; there would be no objection to marrying her daughter if the first wife died childless, but it did not appear to be customary. When told that among another people (the Ba Thonga) if a wife died childless the widower might claim his wife's brother's wife, or take her daughter in her stead, the custom was approved, though foreign to the Shilluk usage.[1]

Avoidance may be relaxed somewhat a few years after marriage,

[1] Classing the wife's brother's wife with the mother-in-law is common in the Sudan: we found no reason for this, but think that given by the Nuer to Professor Evans-Pritchard may probably hold for other tribes (see p. 219). Should the wife's mother die, then her status may be held by the wife's brother's wife.

2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
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606 provided that a child has been born and survived. A man will give his wife's mother a goat, but even then he may only enter the house of the mother-in-law if the latter is very old. He may, however, speak to her and to her sister, and to his father-in-law, but still with head averted and with the utmost ceremony and politeness.

602 A man observes ceremonial avoidance of the wives of certain of his own kinsmen. Thus, although he may enter the houses of his *una* and *umia*, *uwaja* and *una*, *oka* and *kwa*, he cannot visit them as freely as he can the house of his *uwa*, because he must avoid the wives of all these relatives (while with the wives of his *uwa* he may be on quite familiar terms). When he meets any of these women out of doors he may greet them, but with averted head.

604 A man may salute the wife of his *na* but must not sit in the hut with her; she will leave the hut when he enters, and if he should sit upon her mat or skin it would cause death either to himself, his *na*, or the wife of his *na*. A man can never inherit the widow of his *na* as can be done among some other Sudan tribes, e.g. the Bari.

606 We now pass to the male *ora* whom a man must avoid. A man avoids his wife's father, but this avoidance may become less rigid after a time, just as the severity of the mother-in-law avoidance
607 decreases. His wife's brother is treated with respect but scarcely avoided. It was said that nothing would ever relax the avoidance
[604] between a man and his wife's mother's brother (her *na*); they may never speak face to face. No payments are made to him, but should the
602 wife's *na* ask for anything it could not be refused; he might ask for a spear, a canoe, or a sheep, and it must be given, but he would never ask for cattle. The same privileges are claimed by the son of the *na*, the *una* of the wife. A characteristic example was seen in the case of Fakwang. He spent much time in fishing and gave large quantities of the fish he caught to his wife's parents, though the bride-wealth was already fully paid. When asked whether he had made or bought his canoe he looked surprised and said, "Have I not an *ora jahywaja*? I took it from him." The canoe belonged to the husband of his father's sister's daughter. The father of Fakwang had been *na* to this girl and Fakwang as her *una* had inherited the privilege of the *na*, his father. The girl's husband is Fakwang's *ora* and it is he who "fears" Fakwang. The latter, however, shows respect to him and observes the avoidance rules; he did not fetch the canoe himself, but sent his *uwa* (in this instance his father's brother's son and great friend) to get it for him. It is said that a

2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
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man and his *ora jalnywaja* might exchange presents of sheep, the gifts always being presented through a third party. 602

The husband of the sister, either the *nyimia* or the *nyiwa*, is treated in the same way as the husband of the *nyiwaja* and privileges can be claimed from him; the husband of the *nina* is also respected. Thus, though *ora* is a reciprocal term, the respect and deference shown is not mutual. The *ora* to whom deference is paid are the wife's male and female relatives. The most important of these are the mother, the father, the *na* and the *una*, the *uma* and the *umia* of the wife, all of whom are treated with ceremonial avoidance; the *uwa*, though respected, are not avoided. The *ora* from whom a man claims privileges are the husbands of sisters and cousins, especially the husbands of the *nyimia*, *nyima*, and *nywaja* from whose bride-wealth he has received cattle.

There is no avoidance between women; a woman does not avoid her husband's mother. 606

A man must kill a bull at the death feast of an *ora*, the father, mother or brother of his wife, and if he lives near his wife's family he kills a sheep on the day of the death. He must not see the corpse or assist at the burial. 607 764

From the above it will be seen that the conception of *ora* is far from simple. It might at first be supposed that anyone of the wife's clan was *ora* and must consequently be treated with respect, but this is not so; the wife's sister, who is naturally of her clan, is not *ora* and is treated with familiarity; the wife's father's sister (her *waja*) is not avoided. Unfortunately we did not ascertain how the latter was addressed, and do not know of any special duties of the *waja* towards her brother's daughter, though those to his son are important. But the wife's mother's brother (her *na*), who must belong to a different clan from the wife, is *ora*. 602

There seem to be four aspects of the *ora* relationship :—

(1) The primary attitude to the wife's mother, extended on classificatory lines.

(2) The attitude towards those relatives of the wife to whom she stands in some definite relationship.

(3) The attitude a man observes towards the husbands of his own female relatives. Relationships (2) and (3) are reciprocal but the behaviour pattern is not identical.

(4) A woman's attitude towards the relatives of her husband.

2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
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602 We may now consider these different aspects of the *ora* relationship in detail.

606 (1) The avoidance of the mother-in-law is so common a custom in Africa as to be considered habitual. All the implications of the mother-in-law situation cannot be discussed here, but there are two elements in the custom which must be borne in mind—the respect due to the mother of the wife, and the feeling that there must be no hint of sexual impropriety with her. The Shilluk who encountered his wife's father's brother's wife on our steamer said that she would complain to other women that she had seen his " nakedness ". Among [291] a people like the Shilluk, who when they wear any garment only knot a cloth over the shoulder, leaving the genitals exposed, this objection seems remarkable, and does point to the sexual nature of 606 the avoidance. So, by demonstrating in a ceremonial manner that 835 there can never be any possibility of sexual intercourse between himself and any woman whom he treats as mother-in-law, he leaves open an approach to her daughter. If a young Shilluk, who has not yet collected sufficient cattle to marry, desires to exercise his right and consort with the wife of one of his *uwa*, he must treat her mother with respect as though he were the actual husband, and if he has not previously adopted this attitude trouble may arise. Or it may be that he wishes to take the widow of one of his *uwa* as a wife; if he has previously respected the mother-in-law of that *uwa* the way is open, if not, she will make objections which may or may not be overcome by gifts.

606 It is clear that in the wide sense in which the Shilluk use the term *ora* for mother-in-law they cannot actually avoid all these women, and certainly not their villages, for among these *ora* will be found almost all the women of a previous generation not of the man's own clan. Actually a man is concerned to avoid the *ora* of those of his *uwa* with whom he comes in contact, or of those whose marriages are personally interesting to him.

606 As already mentioned, the wife's brother's wife is addressed as 607 *ora* and seems to be looked upon as similar to a mother-in-law. It is clear that she stands in a relationship quite different from that of a wife's sister or a brother's wife. But no reasons were discovered for treating her as a mother-in-law.

606 (2) Amongst these relatives may be considered the wife's father 607 and her brothers. They are her natural protectors to whom she may 583

2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
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complain if her husband ill-treats her; it is to them that the bride-wealth is given, and the fact that this should be returned should she die childless seems to indicate that the bride-wealth may be considered as compensation to her family for the loss of her children rather than as a payment for her as a wife. The wife's *na* and his son both receive part of the bride-wealth, and though they do not belong to her clan they also are *ora*. The avoidance of these relatives of the wife is by no means a common custom (and is not practised by the Dinka). It appears to be correlated to the fact that they receive some of the cattle of the bride-wealth.

(3) The attitude towards the husbands of female relatives is the converse of the above. Though a man must observe respectful behaviour towards the husbands of his sisters and certain cousins, he appears to be in a more favourable position towards them. He receives part of the bride-wealth given by them for his sisters and certain "cousins", and can demand favours from them.

(4) A woman only looks upon her husband's uterine brothers and his mother's sister's sons as her *ora*. She avoids them strictly; any hint of familiarity would be an offence. It is clear that the nature of the avoidance is sexual, and that by means of its observance the possibility of impropriety is prevented. These relatives of the husband stand in sharp distinction to all others.

Although the Shilluk conception of the "in-law" relationship is broad, the omissions from it are as striking as the inclusions. The wife's sisters do not come under the heading *ora* at all. A man may always treat them with familiarity and, if he wants to, take one as a second wife; he has prior claim to anyone else but must give the full bride-wealth. We were told that a rich man might marry all the *umia* of his wife. The wives of the *uwa* are not *ora*; the wives of clansmen stand in two definite categories—those with whom sexual intercourse is permissible and those with whom it is not—and to most of them descriptive terms are used. The wives of all those clansmen called either *wa* or *uwa* belong to the former class, but intercourse with the wives of any other clansmen is said to cause death to both offenders. Care would be taken in dealing with the second class to avoid anything that could possibly be looked on as a compromising situation, such as staying in the house of these relatives when their wives are present, or sitting upon the mat or skin of the woman. Thus, though not called *ora*, they are avoided ceremoniously.

2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
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The omissions from the " in-law " category are equally important from the woman's point of view. She does not call her husband's parents *ora*, but addresses them as though they were her own grandparents; she treats them with respect, kneels when she hands anything to her father-in-law, and turns her head away when she speaks, but there is no strict avoidance. One of our married informants had his mother living with him; she had a separate hut in his enclosure, but she and his wife could eat together if they wished.

A man calls his son's wife *kware*, grandchild; she falls into the category of wives of a clansman with whom sexual intercourse is inadmissable, and no doubt the ceremonial behaviour observed between grandchildren and grandparents is also followed between a man and his son's wife. It has been noted before that a woman uses terms to her husband's relatives that she would use to her own relatives of a generation older, and the custom of consorting with the husband's son and being inherited by him has been suggested as a reason for this.

We have seen that there are certain other women who are treated in the same ceremonial manner as are the *ora*; these are wives of relatives, some, but not all, of whom are clansmen (see p. 61). These women fall into sharp contrast with those other women (wives of clansmen, the *wa* and the *uwa*) with whom connection is permitted during the life of the husband and who may possibly be inherited after his death.

Young people are free to marry the partner of their choice so long as clan exogamy is observed and no genealogical relationship can be traced on the mother's side. Every Shilluk youth is interested in the marriage of his sister and of his father's sister's daughter, for he receives cattle from their bride-wealth and without cattle he cannot himself marry; it is true that his father and his father's sister will assist him to collect cattle for his bride-wealth, but how can they get these except from the marriage of their daughters? A father who used his cattle to marry extra wives while his own sons remained unmarried would be regarded generally with disfavour. The breaking of a marriage—divorce—means the return of cattle to the bridegroom, a difficult matter, as though the bride-wealth is paid to one man, the bride's father or brother, it is immediately distributed and may soon play its part in another's marriage. Thus a man has every reason to desire his sister's marriage to be stable. Yet, in the rules of behaviour that are customary between persons

3:Westermann E-5 (1910) 1912 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

III. FAMILY LIFE.

When a young man wants to marry, he himself asks the girl he has selected; if she assents, she directs her lover to her parents and the old people of the village; if these also do not object, they ask him to bring the dowry, which consists of cattle. From four to six head of oxen and one milch cow is the ordinary price for a woman, besides a number of sheep and goats. But the whole of this dowry is in most cases not paid to the father-in-law at once, before the marriage takes place. One ox is paid to the elders of the village when they arrange the marriage business, one or more at the celebration of the marriage, another when the first child is born. The ox which is slaughtered at the marriage festival is driven to the village of the bride by all the young men of the bridegroom's village. They decorate this ox by tying tassels of cows' tails on the top of the horns. In case the horns have not a good shape for tying these tassels, they are pierced and the tassels are fastened in the holes. A young man in buying an ox is always particular about the shape of the horns for this reason. On the marriage festival vide page 109. — A man cannot reach a social position without being married, and he cannot get a wife without cattle; so every young Shilluk's highest ambition consists in procuring cattle in order to buy a wife. But, as already mentioned, they usually marry before the full dowry is paid, and in such a case the debts of the young husband may become the source of quarrels between husband and wife, and still more between husband and father-in-law. As long as the price is not paid, the father has a legal right to take his daughter back from her husband; but this, though often threatened, is seldom done. Those who have sufficient means will as a rule not be satisfied with one wife, but marry a second and a third; only a very few exceed this number.

MARRIAGE 584 583 585 581 554 606 595

A young man may not marry a girl from his own division or clan, (vide page 127 ff.) but from any other division; the girl may live in the same village or in any other village, but they prefer to marry in a distant village. These marriage laws are a well established tribal custom, and people fear to break them, lest death follow marriage.

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The position of the woman is no doubt a higher one than with most Mohammedan peoples of the Sudan. She is generally well treated and is shown remarkable respect. The women sometimes take part in public assemblies with the men, discuss the affairs that interest them and partake in dances and religious ceremonies. Even in their war-dances the women play an active *rôle*, vide page XXXIX. — If refractory or lazy, the man may give his wife a thrasing with a rope.

POSITION OF WOMEN 562 [593]

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

fend for himself during the intervening months, and he spends the time drinking bowls of beer and smoking pipes of rank tobacco with his cronies, discussing the many complexities of women and particularly that formidable mother-in-law of his whom he may never visit, may never even meet, even going to the length of turning aside from her path and averting his head should he chance to see her on the road. He dreams up, too, rosy dreams of his daughter, for it is always a daughter of course, who will be the apple of his eye and the pride of his life during her childhood and who will bring in many heads of fat cattle when she becomes of marriageable age.

On the day of the birth, a custom, of interest to all, but fraught with a certain amount of apprehension and anxiety to some, takes place. Before the mother is given her baby to nurse she must name publicly all her former lovers. Failure to do so, it is averred, will result in the death of the child, and should she refuse to confess she would not be given the baby at all, but it would be reared by a foster-mother. It may be that the girl can say with honesty that she has had no pre-nuptial amours, and that up to the time of her marriage she had preserved her virginity intact. Since the general character of such a girl would be fairly well known in her own village, her word would be accepted and she would be given the child. But if perchance the infant should die, it would be taken as a sign that she had lied. Unfortunately such paragons of virtue among Shilluk maidenhood are rather rare, and the term 'virgin' applied to a nubile girl has something of an unmeaning character, useful only in distinguishing her from her married sisters. Nobody then is in the least shocked or surprised when the girl recites a number of names of men with whom she has been before her marriage.

The men thus accused may either admit the charge or indignantly deny it. If a man admits his transgression he must pay the outraged husband three sheep or goats, or, if he is the father of the child just born, three cows. If he denies the accusation he undergoes a variation of 'trial by